Childhood Connections October 14, 2025

NEW

Subsidy Rate Change

In response to the market rate survey feedback, the Office of Childhood (OOC) is pleased to announce a new and simplified child care provider rate structure.

Providers should anticipate seeing the new rates take effect for services provided on or after October 1, 2025, and first paid in November 2025.

If you have any questions regarding your rates, please contact the Payments Team at CCPayments@dese.mo.gov or by phone 573-526-1385.

See the full article on Subsidy rate change for more information.

Temporary Child Care Licenses

During the 2025 regular session the legislature granted DESE authority to issue temporary child care licenses. Temporary child care licenses support timely access to child care while maintaining regulatory oversight and protecting the well-being of children.

The policy and Frequently Asked Questions documents can be found on DESE's website.

Missouri Quality Prekindergarten Grants

The next round of Missouri Quality Prekindergarten (MOQPK) grants are available for eligible child care and Head Start programs to deliver prekindergarten for the second half of the academic year. Learn more about these grants, including guidance and the application for funds, on the MOQPK website.

Deadline to apply is **November 7, 2025, at 11:59 p.m.**

For questions, contact the Office of Childhood at Preschool@dese.mo.gov or call 573-751-6793.

First Steps Fiscal Year 2025 Financial Reports Posted

Annual reports outlining First Steps program revenues, expenses, and service costs by System Point of Entry (SPOE) region are now available on the First Steps website.

The First Steps program has five funding sources: state general revenue, federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act grant, family cost participation fees, private insurance, and public insurance (MOHealthNet/Medicaid). These sources create a system of payments that is administered by the DESE.

Resilient Parents, Thriving Children

The OOC in collaboration with the University of Missouri recently created a video training series for parents.

Supported by the Early Childhood Comprehensive System grant, these free, research-based videos for busy parents help build resilience and support your child's development. These videos are perfect for individuals who want to learn how to manage stress, strengthen relationships, and feel more confident as a parent.

UPDATE

Payment on Authorizations and Pay in Advance

The Child Care Subsidy Program is shifting to payments based on authorized enrollment and before the care is provided. We are updating our subsidy rules and terms and conditions to allow DESE to pay in advance for subsidy providers, as well as working on Child Care Data System (CCDS) development for the changes needed.

See the full article on Child Care Subsidy payments for more information.

Family Eligibility Application

The Family Eligibility team has created a document to help families know what information they should have available when submitting the application. You can find that document on the website here: Please note some of the common reasons for delay:

- Missing income documentation- two paystubs are required
- Incorrect or incomplete information
- Not submitting documents within the 10 days of it being requested by DESE

See the full article on Family Eligibility Applications for more information.

Conferences

Registration Missouri School Age Conference

Join fellow educators at the Missouri School Age Conference (MOSAC)!

The Missouri AfterSchool Network invites fellow educators to the 32nd Missouri School Age Conference held November 21-23 at the Lodge of the Four Seasons at the Lake of the Ozarks.

Register today!

Conference on the Young Years 2026

Get ready to Ignite Curiosity & Inspire Possibility at the annual Conference on the Young Years (CYY)! The 53rd Conference on the Young Years will be March 5-7, 2026, at Tan-Tar-A Conference Center in Osage Beach, Missouri.

We have a great lineup of keynote speakers, along with many breakout session presenters. More information coming soon. Learn more about the conference here.

Make plans to join us for the 2026 conference.

OOC Shoutout

OOC is increasing it's efforts in community and office engagement. Assistant Commissioner Deidre and OOC staff have been attending regional listening sessions with local communities and partners. These have been opportunities for providers, agencies, and OOC to come together in our efforts to better serve the community. OOC has been intentional about connecting with our regional staff to make sure they are supported, heard, and valued by the office.

Child Care Compliance Team

Child Care Subsidy Team

Rolla session group

Rolla session group

Spotlight on Success

Spotlight on Success aims to share stories from local programs that are building community partnerships to strengthen and coordinate childhood programs.

For 44 years Judy Howell has been a steady presence in the lives of children and families at Jesus' Little Lambs Child Care in Wellsville, Missouri.

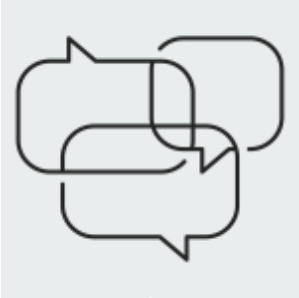
Judy's journey began as a stay-at-home mom seeing a need for local children to socialize and play together. With no early child care local programs available to meet this need, she started offering "babysitting" a few days a week. When her children enter school, Judy and a friend launched a Mother's Morning Out program at her church. She also started working as a parent educator for the Parents as Teachers program in her school district, where she saw firsthand the growing need for quality child care in her community. After 13 years, Judy took a leap of faith and opened a licensed Group Child Care Home.

Her love for children has been her motivation. “I enjoy being active and look forward to going to work. It gives me purpose, and I’m helping to fill a need in my community,” Judy explained. Her success can be measured not just in years but in relationships. She has always had a waiting list, built entirely through word of mouth. Children who once spent their early years with her now bring their own children to her care. “This year, I received a call to put a third-generation child on my waiting list,” she shared.

For Judy, the joy of her work lies in the small, everyday moments. The laughter, stories, and friendships formed with families in her community. “No two days are the same,” she says. “I never know what will spark the children’s interest. I love the stories and giggles I hear daily”.

Judy Howell remains committed to her work. For over four decades, she has been more than a caregiver, she has been a teacher, mentor, and friend to countless children and families. In her words and her work, she embodies the belief that every child deserves a strong start in life.

We Want To Know



Share your stories with the Office of Childhood!

Submit news and updates about Missouri Early Care and Education!

Or email OOCOutreach@dese.mo.gov.

Miss Something?

Visit the OOC webpage to find previous editions of Childhood Connections.

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